

DIARMUID MARTIN  
Archbishop of Dublin

15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

**Pastoral reflections for use at all Masses on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May  
Feast of the Ascension of the Lord.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write on the subject of marriage and the family in the light of the upcoming referendum. I have asked parishes to make available in Churches some material to aid your reflection.

Marriage is linked with the family where mothers and fathers bring different, yet complementary gifts and strengths into a child's life. Marriage is not simply about a wedding ceremony or about two people being in love with each other.

I ask you to reflect on why humans exist as male and female? It is not an accident or a social construct. There is a unique complementarity between men and women, male and female, rooted in the very nature of our humanity. I believe that this complementarity belongs to the fundamental definition of marriage. The vast majority of States in Europe and worldwide interpret marriage in that sense.

I encourage you to consider very carefully the profound implications which the constitutional amendment on marriage would have on the family and on our understanding of parenthood.

Some say that the change will not affect those who do not agree with it and will not affect marriages which take place in Church. No politician can promise that, since it will be exclusively up to the courts to interpret the changed Constitution.

In the debates around same sex marriage in Argentina, Pope Francis was very clear that he was against same sex marriage yet he was consistent in telling people not to make judgements on any individual. I know that the severity with which the Irish Church treated gay and lesbian people in the past – and in some cases still today – makes it difficult for some to understand the Church's position.

The change is not simply about extending marriage rights to others; it is not just a debate about religious views; it is a fundamental change in the philosophy which underpins cohesion in society and thus affects and concerns every citizen. I remind all of you of your civic responsibility to vote. I urge you before voting to remember that marriage really matters and to reflect carefully and be informed before changing its definition.

With prayerful good wishes,

Yours very sincerely in the Lord

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a plus sign and followed by the name 'Diarmuid Martin' in a cursive script, ending with a period.

+ Diarmuid Martin  
Archbishop of Dublin